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REVIEWS

- (A) **Deutscher Lehrgang** by E. Prokosch and C. M. Purin. **Erstes Jahr** by E. Prokosch. Holt and Co., 1916. 242 pp. \$1.00.
First German Lessons in Phonetic Spelling by E. Prokosch. Holt and Co., 1916. 12 mo., 32 pp. \$.25.
- (B) **A Brief Course in German** by Marian P. Whitney and Lilian L. Stroebe. Holt and Co., 1917. 12 mo., ix + 199 pp. \$1.00.

In the introduction to a series of reviews of some recent texts for beginners in German (MLJ April, 1916), regret was expressed that in general, for commercial or other reasons, authors refrained from addressing themselves to a specific age and condition of learner, and to some definite type of instruction. These two books, which Holt and Co. have added to their already long list of German grammars, have not been so uncertain in their prefatory remarks. (A) "endeavors to be entirely consistent in the carrying out of the principles of the *Reformmethode* as [the author has] interpreted and adapted [them] in [his] *Teaching of German in Secondary Schools*." (B) is "intended for beginners in German, especially for those who begin in the last two years of the High School or in college. It is also designed for pupils who have had one year's work . . . and who . . . need a thorough review of grammar." It uses "the direct method as the basis of instruction." These are clear-cut statements of principle and definitions of limits. (B) still addresses itself, however, to the high-school junior and the college freshman as if they were one and the same, we shall observe with what success.

(A) consists of two main divisions. The first extends to p. 176 and is composed of thirty *Abschnitte*, of which the 15th and 30th are reviews and the 29th offers no new grammatical material. Each *Abschnitt* is, in turn, divided into six parts, consisting usually of 1. Connected basic reading text; 2. *Erklärungen* to the text, almost all in German; 3. grammar explanations in German; 4. *Fragen* based on the text; 5. grammar practice with directions in German; 6. either a) additional grammar practice, or b) another text, or c) additional paradigms or grammar facts. The order of these sections is not always the same, it is not clear whether by plan or accident. The suggestion of such a division is that each *Abschnitt* should afford enough work for one week, with slight allowance for slower progress. As indicated in the title, the plan of the authors of this series was to produce a book that could be finished in one year in high school, but in spite of generous omissions there is still more grammatical material than the ordinary high-school class can master in one year. Some topics could with profit have been still more reduced, as, e. g., the possessives. As a rule the grammatical material within each *Abschnitt* is well unified, No. 8 being the only notable exception.

The second main division of the book is in English and offers a condensed synopsis of Grammar covering 46 pp., which is sufficient for ordinary high-school reference, although weak in certain subjects, such as the use of cases. A G-E vocabulary of about 1000 words, mostly separate stems, follows.

Pronunciation is treated systematically throughout the first eleven *Abschnitte* and the vocabulary is provided with phonetic transcriptions, of which more later. There is no E-G vocabulary, since no retranslation exercises are given. The text is supplied with a good map of Germany, in colors and with three small sketch maps of rivers, cities, etc. A number of the usual poems and songs with music are presented. It is to be regretted that not more of the simple little cuts such as those e. g., on pp. 37, 61, 140 are given; they are invaluable with this direct type of instruction.

The basic reading texts in each *Abschnitt* are unusually good. While they deal with things that are characteristic of German life, they avoid the usual vapid type of *realien* and lead us into the realm of myth and fable, history and literature, as a glance at a few titles will show: *Rübezahl und der Glaser*; *Till Eulenspiegel*; *Eine Münchhausen-Geschichte*; *Die Sage vom Loreleifelsen*; *Barbarossa im Kyffhäuser*; *Die Mühle von Sanssouci*; *Wilhelm Tell*, etc. With such attractive subject-matter the author has managed to combine a wealth of illustrations for his grammatical points, such as one will scarcely find equalled in any other beginning text. For instance, in Text XXIII, supposed to illustrate the present of strong verbs, there are no less than nineteen forms showing the vowel change, besides numerous other forms of verbs belonging in this group; and all this in about 23 full lines. This abundant illustrative material has not impaired the naturalness of the style. Classroom use has failed to demonstrate the validity of objections to the vocabulary of the texts on the grounds of difficulty and unusualness. While such words e. g., as *Teuerung*, *Erwachsene*, the place names and political terms in XXVII-XXVIII, and others are undoubtedly unusual for beginners, the vocabulary as a whole strikes a very happy medium between a preparation for speaking knowledge and a basis for future literary work or general reading. The *Erklärungen*, which take the place of the usual special vocabularies, explain terms by means of German wherever feasible, but do not hesitate to employ English when clearer understanding will result. Individual objections do not seem to merit place here in view of the general excellence of this feature of the book.

The *Fragen*, while at times introducing material not yet formally presented, are excellent. The *Übungen* are sufficiently numerous and varied. They consist, however, somewhat too much of hints, indications, or suggestions, which need constant supplementing to make them of maximum benefit to the pupil. The omission of all retranslation exercises, while strictly in accord with the plan of the text, will undoubtedly meet with the approval of only a limited number of teachers. Especially commendable are the repeated and insistent instructions as to the manner of approaching a reading text (pp. 10, 27, 28, 32, etc.). Equally good are the instructions on pronunciation. Both of these last named features will be a liberal education in the direct method and in phonetics to many a high-school teacher, as well as a great help to the pupil. The practice in question-forming (e. g., pp. 41-42) must also be given special favorable mention.

When one comes to speak of the distribution of material and the presentation of grammar facts, this very commendatory tone must be altered. Here the book decidedly departs from the simpler high-school type. The condensation

of grammar material, as, e. g., on p. 45, the whole tone of the statements of grammar principles, the replacing of a strong-verb list by the table of *Ablaut*-classes on p. 200 and in *Abschnitte* 10-11, the abbreviated paradigms such as those on pp. 193 ff., the treatment of such important topics as the weak and strong adjective endings, pp. 92, 98—all of these things are rather suited to appeal to the more mature mind of the college student than to that of the ordinary high-school pupil. If, as mentioned in a preceding review, certain recent arrivals among beginners' texts go to the extreme of too much elaborate simplification, our present author certainly presupposes a stage of insight and logical reasoning which few of our high-school pupils have reached. This is, of course, a serious fault, and one which will go far toward preventing the book from ever becoming widely popular with the average high-school teacher. The abandonment of the traditional arrangement, also, while absolutely justified in itself, will undoubtedly discourage many teachers from ever even thoroughly understanding the author's plan.

The author's belief in the use of a phonetic transcription in the early weeks of instruction is well known. He has prepared a pamphlet entitled *First German Lessons in Phonetic Spelling*, which is identical, or practically so, with the first five *Abschnitte* of the *Lehrgang*, and which is intended to be used with it. There can be no serious objection to experimentation with the phonetic transcription, of course, but there is serious objection to the introduction at the same time of a totally new modification of the established alphabet of the International Phonetic Association, such as our author has devised, no matter what its phonetic merits may be. This complicates the experiment and renders any general use of it improbable. It has, furthermore, led to the use of this "simplified" transcription for indicating pronunciation in the vocabulary, and to the consistent use of [e:] for long-*e*, which may be justifiable, but which cannot be of any practical benefit; rather the opposite. It is to be regretted that here the scholar has apparently allowed himself to lose touch with the practical teacher.

Minor flaws, such as omission of words from the general vocabulary apparently without plan (cf. p. 6); rare typographical errors (cf. p. 112, l. 11); unpedagogical arrangement of exceptions before rules (cf. p. 21, l. 8); such doubtful pronunciations as *vön* (p. 3, l. 3), can only be hinted at here. They are not numerous.

The writer has used this text with both college and high-school classes. This experience, as well as the arguments advanced above, leads to the conclusion that the book is a remarkable contribution to our materials for direct-method teaching. It surpasses in excellence both of the author's previous efforts (*Introduction to German*, 1911, and *German for Beginners*, 1913), of which much of the material has been worked over here. It is very well adapted to rapid college work and is so arranged that several *Abschnitte* toward the close can be omitted entirely if time presses. On the other hand, it is not particularly adapted to the high-school stage of mental development, in spite of the author's evident intention, and in spite of such devices as the instructions for keeping a grammar note-book, which deserves favorable men-

tion, by the way, and which might, if consistently used, do much to make the condensed statements of grammar rules and facts clear to the high-school pupil. Just as the author has seen his treatment of the subjunctive grow in favor (cf. MLJ for Nov. 1917, pp. 78-83), so he may possibly see his modified phonetic transcription come into use, but at present it will probably prove a handicap, such as a man thinking ahead of his times frequently has to experience. The text, finally, does not afford the pupil much opportunity for self-help, but must be worked by a teacher who understands the plan. Under such conditions, with careful handling and supplementing, it gives excellent results, even in high-school classes, owing to the many splendid features that have been noted.

With (B) we return to a much more traditional type. It is divided into Part I (Lessons), 104 pp., and Part II (Grammar), 72 pp. Part I consists of 48 lessons. The first 38, of which each fifth one is a review, present all the necessary forms and syntax. The other 10 offer additional drill material, including "Daily Life in Verb Drill," "Constructions Differing in German and English: Habitual Mistakes," and "Daily Exercises in German Pronunciation." The arrangement of each lesson is 1. Grammar topic with references by section numbers only to Part II; 2. special vocabulary giving English equivalents; 3. from four to seven drill exercises, with directions in German, frequently repeated in English. The review lessons usually contain a still larger number of drill exercises and do not call merely for formal statements of rules. Part II contains the grammatical rules and paradigms from the older Whitney's *Brief German Grammar*, including a strong-verb table. In alphabetical lists (G-E and E-G) at the end the 700 words of the vocabulary are referred to by the number of the section or page where they occur, and no English meanings are given. It is interesting to note that Prokosch used this device in his *Introduction to German*, but has discarded it in his later books. The plan is certainly justified from a pedagogical view-point. A list of German and English grammatical terms, and an index complete the volume. There is a good map in colors, with German names.

The authors have purposely omitted all reading material as such from the book (cf. p. IV and the 8 pp. pamphlet, *Suggestions for Class Use*, to be had from the publishers). There is, however, in each lesson except the reviews a sort of colloquy, supposed to form a basis for the freer type of composition, either oral or written, which is called for in the exercise immediately following. For example, p. 38, in a half-page is given an imaginary set of class directions spoken by a teacher of German. Then the pupil is asked to describe in detail a German recitation and his preparation for it. This is as near an inductive presentation as the text affords. It is evident from the order of arrangement already indicated, that in every other respect the lessons are of as deductive a nature as it is possible to make them. It does not become clear, therefore, how the authors can justly claim to use the direct method as the basis of instruction when they violate absolutely two of its leading tenets, viz.: grammar developed inductively as the handmaid of the text, and reading as the center of all instruction. The fact that German is indicated as the language of the class room is not sufficient of itself to make the method direct. Further-

more, a book proceeding along direct-method lines presupposes a systematic treatment of pronunciation through abundant drill exercises, at least. The one and a half pp. of such drill which this book contains scarcely afford sufficient basis for a claim to systematic treatment. Indeed, the authors discard such a treatment as undesirable (cf. *Suggestions*, p. 8.)

But if these inconsistencies are passed over, the exercises themselves contain much that is worthy of praise. Mutation exercises, conjugations in complete sentences, declensions, blank-filling, sentence-forming, questions to be answered, question-forming, retranslation exercises, *freie Übungen*: all these and more offer great variety and suggest much to the teacher who desires to supplement. Such supplementing would surely be necessary, especially in a high school class, as the authors themselves recognize (*Suggestions*, p. 5). The verb receives especially early and full treatment, certainly with entire justification.

The synopsis of grammar in Part II contains all necessary material, very well arranged. The statements are conservative. There are some ingenious devices, as, e. g., the sets of declensional endings on p. 117. Some doubtful or obscure statements occur, as, e. g., "The possessive is not used in its uninflected form as predicate" (p. 133) or, "Such a subjunctive (*viz.*, indirect discourse) may be either in the present (the tense that was used in the direct statement) or more usually in the past, as in English, but a tense differing in form from the indicative is generally chosen when possible" (p. 162). On the whole, however, there are fewer objectionable features than in most reference sections.

Although, as we have seen, (B) is specifically called a book for high school or college, it, like (A), uses a logical and condensed arrangement that is rather suited to the more mature, college type of mind. There is no doubt that it could be used successfully in the junior year of high school, but its field seems rather to be the college, where a more deductive presentation and a less abundant quantity (not variety) of drill is made desirable by the speed required. For review purposes in the second year of college work the book is admirably adapted, and fully justifies the claims of the authors (cf. p. iii). In conclusion it might be said that while (A) represents a sincere attempt to carry out to their logical conclusion the ideas of the *Reformmethode*, (B) adds one more to the numerous recent illustrations of the ancient fable of the wren and the canary. Justice compels us to add that the wren itself is a very useful and likeable bird.

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A Spanish Reader for Beginners, by M. A. DeVitis. Boston, New York, Chicago: Allyn & Bacon, 1917. 12mo., XVI + 431 pp.

Libro de amena e interesante lectura, y el más completo que hasta la fecha ha aparecido sobre los países hispánicos, para la enseñanza del español, es este que el señor de Vitis acaba de publicar. Tanto en la primera parte, dedicada a la vieja metrópoli, como en la segunda, a la América española,